



President's Report 2021 Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc.

'It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all our organizations staff and volunteers that as I write this our indoor season is up and running and our facilities are filled once more with the sounds of soccer.' That's how the Presidents report ended for 2020 within days our leagues were once again shut down due to the pandemic.

Another year has gone by, the likes of which no one could have imagined or foreseen. There was no manual or instruction book to prepare or navigate through the ever changing restrictions and public health orders. A year no volunteer in this organisation would have signed up for but we did anyway and we came through 2021 with flying colours. The challenges last year started with what could have been a week, or a month, but then a year has turned into where we are today. Our nation and our community are still in the throes of the pandemic twenty months later, and we continue to face challenges on a daily basis.

Once again, under the leadership of our Executive Director Amanda Probe, our staff excelled. Faced with a changing environment our staff rose to the challenge, never faltered or missed a beat. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the tireless efforts and dedication of all our volunteers, coaches, managers, board members, parents and players for making SYSI your escape or happy place, in a world of uncertainty and turmoil.

The indoor season started well last year until we were shut down in November. We went from a full indoor schedule to training under very strict COVID-19 protocols. Nonetheless, our athletes and volunteers kept showing up and did not quit. As our athletes stayed with us something else wonderful happened. Out of the pandemic arose the seed of an idea, a concept. Our five zones came together and the Alliance was born. The Saskatoon soccer landscape changed. Saskatoon Youth Soccer Inc. (SYSI) re-structured its former Premier, Division II and III leagues by introducing a new 'City League' and 'Alliance League', as well as the birth of SYSI's Alliance Academy. Something wonderful that germinated and grew out of the chaos and uncertainty of the pandemic. A cooperation born of necessity none of us had seen before, an alliance of our five zones, united in a common cause to provide excellence and to further meet the needs of all players.

The introduction of the City League for U11 to U19 provides players a lower commitment option which focuses on a more relaxed environment with the removal of player evaluations, making practices optional, and keeping things fun yet competitive with referees (U11+) and standings (U13+). The re-structuring of the former divisional leagues to the Alliance League A and B for U11 to U19 removed the negative perception of Division III and places a greater emphasis on training and a greater alignment to Canada Soccer Association's Long Term Player Development model with all teams receiving two team weekly practices and one weekly game. Last but not least, the creation of the Alliance Academy provides the framework necessary to offer high quality supplemental training under the direction of SYSI, our five

zone technical directors, and highly certified coaches, for players citywide to compliment the Alliance League and their zone team training schedules.

With the roll out of the vaccinations, in 2021 there was hope but the appearance of a fourth wave meant difficult decisions had to be made. Policies and restrictions that went over and above provincial recommendations were introduced such as a proof of full vaccine requirement for players 18 and older as well as all SYSI team personnel. Saskatoon Soccer Centre Inc. (SSCI) also did their part under the direction of SYSI and Saskatoon Adult Soccer Inc. (SASI) to implement a proof of vaccine or negative test for all spectators aged 18 or older for both soccer facilities. I'd like to thank all volunteers within our zones and community associations, boards and staff of SYSI, SASI, and SSCI for their collaboration in providing consistent COVID-19 measures aimed at enhancing safety of our sport and facilities.

As 2021 draws to a close make no mistake that this pandemic is still not over, nor will it be for the foreseeable months ahead. We therefore must remain vigilant, be vaccinated, wear masks, sanitise regularly and maintain social distance.

We do not know what the future holds, but what I do know is that SYSI is in good hands. Our Executive Director and her staff have performed their duties above and beyond any expectation. The board of directors have excelled throughout the demands of this difficult year. And our zones are stronger and more united than ever. I feel we are more prepared than ever to handle whatever happens next!

Thank you

Mark Millard
President Saskatoon Youth Soccer

